

who constitute my Congressional staff. I greatly appreciate their service to me and the people of New York's 23rd Congressional District, which I have had the privilege and honor to represent since 1993.

New York's 23rd Congressional District encompasses 11 counties in Northern and Central New York: Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, and St. Lawrence. It is bounded by Lake Champlain on the east, the St. Lawrence River to the north, and Lake Ontario to the west. Additionally, it includes the Thousand Islands and most of the Adirondack Park, which have both long been world renowned for their incredible beauty. The District is also home to historic battlefields, such as Fort Ticonderoga, Ogdensburg, Plattsburgh and Sackets Harbor, and it has been the birthplace of national leaders including former Vice President William A. Wheeler of Malone and former House of Representatives Minority Leader Bertrand H. Snell of Colton. However, most importantly, it is where a capable, generous, independent, proud, and resourceful people reside.

During the time I have had the honor of representing the people of Northern and Central New York, I have been blessed to have had a dedicated and talented staff. Given my time as staff to former New York State Senator H. Douglas Barclay, I can well appreciate their efforts. While I value the efforts of everyone who has served on my staff, at this time I would like to recognize the following men and women who have served during the 111th Congress: Michael Backus, Donna Bell, Karen Brayton, Diane Henderson, Mike Holland, Anne LeMay, Mira Lezell, Jason Miller, Ruth Mary Orloff, Matt Satterley, John Sweeney, Robert Taub, Melanie Turpin, Stephanie Valle, and Kate Wehrle. As I have candidly confessed on more than one occasion, I simply could have never fulfilled the duties of my office without their tireless efforts. Accordingly, at this time, I wish to thank them for their excellent service and wish them my best for a productive future.

CONGRATULATING THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF COLORED PEOPLE ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR
100TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 21, 2009

Mr. KANJORSKI. Madam Speaker, I rise today to ask you and my esteemed colleagues in the House of Representatives to pay tribute to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on the occasion of their 100th anniversary, which is being celebrated at the annual Freedom Fund Banquet at Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs in Plains Township, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, on Thursday, September 24, 2009.

The NAACP, with more than a half million members, is the largest and oldest civil rights organization in the United States that dedicates itself to the advocacy of civil rights, social justice and equal opportunity under the law.

Founded on February 12, 1909, the NAACP is widely recognized and frequently conducts

voter mobilization and advocates for equal opportunity in both the public and private sectors.

From the ballot box to the classroom, the dedicated workers, organizers and leaders who forged this great organization and maintain its status as a champion of social justice fought long and hard to ensure that the voices of all ethnic minorities would be heard. For 100 years, it has been the talent and tenacity of NAACP members that has saved lives and changed many negative aspects of American society.

As honorary co-chairs of this event, Robert Soper, president and CEO of Mohegan Sun at Pocono Downs and David Lee, president of the United Way of Wyoming Valley, deserve credit for raising awareness to the valuable place the NAACP holds in our American society.

Likewise, the founders and current officers and executive committee members of the Wilkes-Barre branch of the NAACP, deserve recognition and appreciation for the role they play in preserving the traditions of the NAACP and highlighting the organization's positive influence for future generations to emulate.

The Wilkes-Barre branch of the NAACP was formed February 10, 1930, when it received its first charter. That charter was re-activated in 1984 and the NAACP subsequently has provided uninterrupted service to northeastern Pennsylvania.

Since the re-activation of the local charter, presidents of the organization have included: Audrey Spence, Bob Crawford, Tyrone Edmunds, Constance Wynn, Bonnie Wynder and Ronald Felton, who has held the office of president since 1997 and is the longest serving president to date.

In 1998, President Felton was elected to the Executive Committee of the Pennsylvania State Conference of the NAACP Branches and he continues to serve in that capacity to this day.

Under President Felton's leadership, the Wilkes-Barre NAACP has handled complaints of racial discrimination, hosted racial summits, improved race relations, hosted diversity picnics, endeavored to increase representation of minority teachers in the region, raised awareness of constitutional rights, promoted voter registration and participation, promoted awareness of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the holiday named in honor of him, promoted the first ever NAACP history tour to Colonial Williamsburg for NEPA high school students, advocated for juvenile rights in the justice system, participated in a presidential summit on America's Future headed by Gen. Colin Powell, participated in League of Women Voters discussions to encourage citizen participation in the election process and helped raise awareness of the injustice associated with racial profiling.

Serving on the Wilkes-Barre NAACP executive committee are: David Barber, Peggy Felton, Clinton Harrison, Angel Jirau, David Wallin and Sid Williams.

Madam Speaker, please join me in congratulating the NAACP for 100 years of remarkable service to this nation. In fostering appreciation of and justice for racial minorities, the NAACP has become a champion for human rights and a beacon of human civility and deserves the respect and admiration of the entire nation.

INTRODUCING TRIBAL HEALTH
BENEFITS CLARIFICATION ACT
OF 2009

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, September 21, 2009

Mr. BECERRA. Madam Speaker, I rise to introduce the "Tribal Health Benefits Clarification Act of 2009" with Representatives DEVIN NUNES, NICK RAHALL, JOE BACA, SHELLEY BERKLEY, MARY BONO-MACK, DAN BOREN, TOM COLE, WALLY HERGER, DALE KILDEE, JOHN KLINE, JERRY LEWIS, BEN RAY LUJÁN, KEVIN MCCARTHY, BETTY MCCOLLUM, FRANK PALLONE, EARL POMEROY, GEORGE RADANOVICH, and HEATH SHULER. This bipartisan legislation will clarify that medical care and health coverage provided by Indian tribes for their members, as well as health care provided by the Indian Health Service, or IHS, are not taxable under the Internal Revenue Code.

The federal government has a longstanding policy of providing medical care to Indians. To effect this policy, 25 U.S.C. section 1601 states a "major national goal of the United States is to provide the quantity and quality of health services which will permit the health status of Indians to be raised to the highest possible level," and specific authorization for IHS is provided in 25 U.S.C. section 13.

However, statistics on the health status of Native Americans compared with the general population are alarming. Native Americans have a life expectancy that is nearly 5 years shorter than other Americans, and death rates from diseases such as tuberculosis, alcoholism, and diabetes that are many times higher than in the general population.

Despite this overwhelming need, funds appropriated for IHS programs have been consistently inadequate to meet even basic health care requirements. In fact, IHS has found that per beneficiary, the IHS received 40 percent less funding than the average cost of a mainstream health insurance plan, thus limiting health care services and contributing to poorer health outcomes among the population it is intended to serve.

To address the needs of their people in the face of the IHS funding shortfall, many Indian tribal governments have dedicated portions of their revenues to funding health care programs. The IRS and federal courts have consistently held that payments made under similar social benefit programs for the promotion of general welfare are not taxable. However, the test to determine whether a benefit falls under this doctrine is based on facts and circumstances and is difficult to apply. In addition, no formal guidance has been issued by the IRS to assist in these determinations. Statutory language is needed to clarify the tax treatment of these medical care benefits.

The "Tribal Health Benefits Clarification Act of 2009" would provide a statutory clarification that, consistent with the federal government's policy of providing health care services to Indians, neither health care provided by IHS nor medical care provided by an Indian tribe to its members is subject to income taxation.

I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting this important bipartisan legislation to further the federal government's stated goal of raising the health status of the Native American community.